

from offering amendments. This undercuts the basic tradition of the Senate to allow Senators to offer amendments. Regrettably, this has been a practice developed in the Senate by majority leaders on both sides of the aisle, so both Republicans and Democrats are to blame.

On June 12, 2008, I voted in favor of cloture on the motion to proceed on S.3101, legislation similar to H.R. 6331, to prevent the reduction in Medicare payments to physicians. At that time, I was assured by Majority Leader REID that he would not make a procedural motion to fill the tree. Following the failure to obtain cloture on the motion to proceed to S.3101, Finance Chairman BAUCUS and Ranking Member GRASSLEY began to negotiate a bipartisan bill that could be brought before the Senate. I have concerns with some provisions that may have been contained in such an agreement. However, the prospect of the Senate working its will and allowing myself and other Senators to offer amendments to such a bill is more favorable than filling the amendment tree.

The posture of the Senate is such that for the Majority Leader to complete action on H.R. 6331 and send it to the President before the physician payment reduction is scheduled to go into effect at the end of June, the Senate must pass the same legislation the House of Representatives passed. This is the case because the House of Representatives adjourned for the Independence Day recess prior to the Senate vote on cloture on the motion to proceed to H.R. 6331. Since the House will be out of session, there will be no possibility for the House to consider a Senate amended Medicare bill. To guarantee that the same Medicare legislation will be passed by the Senate, no amendments to the legislation were permitted. By bringing this legislation up at the last minute after the House of Representatives adjourned the Majority Leader prevented the opportunity to offer amendments and undermined Senate procedure.

If cloture were to have been obtained on the motion to proceed to H.R. 6331 the legislation would have been vetoed by President Bush. That veto would have resulted in a further delay, since the House would not be in session to override the veto and the scheduled physician payment reductions would go into effect at the end of June. There was an expectation that the Senate would extend the current physician payment rate for 30 days and prevent the pending reduction from going into effect. However, when this legislative extension was offered by Senate Republican Leader MCCONNELL it was objected to by Majority Leader REID.

This vote was a crass partisan political exercise. The majority leader has been aware of this issue for some time and scheduling should have accommodated for the amendment process. I have consistently voted in favor of increasing Medicare physician payments

and will continue to, but I am not going to vote in favor of cloture when there is no opportunity to amend the legislation that comes before the Senate. I will not submit to procedures that prevent the Senate from performing its traditional duty. This is why I voted against cloture on the motion to proceed to H.R. 6331. I expect that this very important issue will be taken up as soon as we return from the Independence Day recess so we can correct this grave problem in a manner that allows the Senate to work its will.

PAKISTAN COALITION SUPPORT FUNDS

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, in the wake of 9/11, Congress developed a new program to provide financial assistance to allied countries as they joined us in combating al-Qaida. This program reimbursed partner countries for defense spending above and beyond their normal military budget. And of the 27 coalition partner countries who receive this assistance—also known as Coalition Support Funds—Pakistan has been by far the largest recipient, receiving more than \$5.5 billion out of a total \$7 billion allocated for this program.

This program could have been an important part of our global fight against terrorists who pose a very real threat to our country. But a new Government Accountability Office report shows that, in fact, the outcome was just the opposite. Over the past 7 years, U.S. taxpayer dollars have continued to flow with only minimal oversight while we have still not found Osama bin Laden and his senior officials and while al-Qaida has developed a safe haven in Pakistan.

The GAO report details numerous examples of this wasteful spending, including \$20 million paid to the Pakistani Government for road construction and \$15 million to build bunkers—with no evidence that either was ever built. Or what about the more than \$200 million provided for air defense radars with no analysis into whether such technology was needed to fight al-Qaida—an organization not known to have air force capacity? Confronting the threat of al-Qaida and its affiliates must be our top national security priority, and this GAO report sends a strong signal that we need to seriously step up our oversight when providing U.S. taxpayer dollars to our partners in this fight. We can not give them a blank check and expect to them to take care of the job.

The Defense Department's carelessness and negligence has led to a situation where billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars cannot be fully accounted for. With so many domestic programs here at home feeling the brunt of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan this is simply unacceptable. And given the implications for our national security both here at home and abroad, it cannot continue.

GAS PRICE REDUCTION ACT

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I have sought recognition to discuss legislation introduced yesterday entitled the Gas Price Reduction Act. I have agreed to join over forty of my Republican colleagues to cosponsor this legislation because I believe Congress needs to take action to address high oil and gasoline prices, as well as America's overall energy security going into the future.

My cosponsorship of this bill does not mean that every provision has my full support. My office received the final legislative text late yesterday morning and I have not had a great deal of time to analyze all of the details. That said, I have reluctantly decided to cosponsor this bill to signal my concern with the state of our Nation's energy situation. I have long supported efforts to reduce U.S. oil demand through conservation and efficiency whenever practical, as well as increase domestic oil production in an environmentally safe manner, and encourage energy markets that are free of price manipulation.

I am extremely concerned about the high cost of oil, gasoline, diesel and other fuels which are exacerbating our nation's already difficult economic situation and truly hurting American consumers and families. With oil near \$140 per barrel and gasoline over \$4 per gallon, we are facing an unsustainable situation.

The legislation introduced today proposes to increase the supply of oil, promote technology to lower fuel consumption, and increase oversight and transparency of energy markets. Specifically, the bill would allow consideration for oil exploration and production on the Outer Continental Shelf on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts with appropriate environmental protection at the request of a State's Governor and State legislature. Any authorized drilling could only occur beyond 50 miles offshore and only if the federal government determines that leasing would not create an unreasonable risk of harm to the marine, human, or coastal environment. Further, all existing environmental laws would have to be followed.

The second part of the bill would allow the Department of Interior to move forward with leasing of land in the Western U.S. to develop oil shale. It is my understanding that there are very large deposits of energy resources that could be tapped with significant investments in rock extraction technology. This resource is much less understood than oil and natural gas drilling. I support locating as many domestic resources as we can in an environmentally safe manner. However, I am concerned about claims made by opponents that opening these lands at this time is premature until Congress and the executive branch have the ability to study the results of research and development efforts. Further, some argue that Congress should first review regulations drafted by the Bureau of Land